

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**FIXING THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP:
IMPROVING U.S. – EUROPEAN RELATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

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The US-led war in Iraq increased the visibility of the tension between the United States and some of its important European allies. Though tensions have existed for decades, the rift is becoming so great that it is deleterious to US foreign policy and counter-productive to the pursuit of US national interests. Strong disagreement with US foreign policy has led to palpable anti-American sentiment in Western Europe and anti-American rhetoric is flourishing in European print media. To begin to improve relations with Europe, one must understand the fundamental reasons for the divide. Cultural and ideological differences figure prominently. These have historical origins that shape current perspectives and policies both internally and externally. Disagreement with each other's foreign policies such as relations with the Middle East, US unilateralism and use of force also figure heavily. Though the US and Europe may just have to agree to disagree on many issues, there are a number of actions both sides can and must take to improve relations and preserve the effectiveness of this important relationship.

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FIXING THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP: IMPROVING U.S. – EUROPEAN RELATIONS

Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus: They agree on little and understand each other less and less... When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and fashioning and implementing foreign and defense policies, the United States and Europe have parted ways.

— Robert Kagan

The latest wedge to be driven into the Atlantic Alliance, the war in Iraq, has the potential to be its greatest challenge in NATO's 54-year history. As the US continues the daunting task of rebuilding Iraq almost entirely on its own, it is clear that America cannot do it alone either politically or economically, and that the effort can last for years. US requests to its European allies for assistance have been met with resistance, causing the rift in US-European relations to become more tangible; and it has been exacerbated by the dispute over reconstruction contracts. It was not the US-led war on Iraq alone, however, that led to this divide. It is also the consequence of fundamental differences that have developed since NATO's inception. Since that time there have been serious disagreements in the alliance over US opposition to the French, British and Israeli seizure of the Suez Canal in the 1950's, the French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command in the 1960's, the Euromissiles battle in the 80's, and the Balkan intervention in the 90's.¹ Most recently there have been issues of National Missile Defense, the Anti-ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and what has now become almost a standard list of diplomatic differences, which includes the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Kyoto Protocol. During the Cold War, however, there was a common strategy that virtually guaranteed that the alliance could heal its wounds. But because there is now no common cause or strategy, around which the parties can rally, the rift is all the more foreboding.

The use of the term "European" does not necessarily connote all of the countries on the continent of Europe. The split is mainly between the US and France, Germany and Belgium, but the distinction is not quite so simple. Not all European nations behave the same way and the number and philosophies of the nations that comprise "Europe" are evolving. As Europe continues to enlarge eastward, there are differences in philosophy between what may be viewed as the traditional European countries, now known as "Old Europe" and the post-communist era democracies, now called "New Europe." Some attribute this perception to an effort by US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to engineer a rift between European powers based on their support of the war in Iraq, but there are European diplomats who also make this distinction.²

This does not, however, do justice to the complex political motivations of the European countries. For example, Britain's decision to back the US in the Iraqi war was opposed by the British public majority. Further, countries such as Italy and Spain may be taking a pro-US stance because it is in their interest to maintain the "free ride" of long-term US security. Similarly, some of the "new" European countries will support the US position because they expect to be rewarded with economic assistance, possible NATO membership, and because they value US protection. This lack of cohesiveness among European nations is largely driven by the politics of the nascent European Union (EU) and, in the case of the French president, German chancellor and Belgian Prime Minister, the motivation to further their own political ambitions (which reflect public opinion).³

There are many different and valid explanations concerning the reason for the US-European estrangement. There are also differing opinions as to whether fixing the relationship is worth the effort, if it can be fixed at all. Suffice it to say, however, the existing circumstances were borne of a variety of reasons that now complicate the pursuit of each other's foreign policy and promotion of national interests. Both the US and Europe need to find ways to mend the rift. Failure to do so will further complicate security challenges for both parties in the very near future. The purpose of this paper is to help find these ways by examining why the alliance is of continued importance to both parties and why, despite this importance, the rift between them has occurred.

WHY MUST RELATIONS BE MAINTAINED?

The desire for unimpeded trade, the rule of law, safety and security, the protection of property and the free movement of people and capital match world needs, not just American ones. ⁴

—Bill Emmott

America's dominant role in the world today, particularly the lack of peer economic and military competitors, would seem to indicate that the US really does not need a transatlantic alliance. But this approach overlooks some very important points. To begin with, the transatlantic relationship is the largest institution comprised only of democratic countries. Moreover, NATO is a major stakeholder in the international order. In the war against terrorism, the US needs European cooperation in law enforcement, intelligence, and logistics, and European partners are necessary to help promote liberalization of trade, financial stabilization, environmental protection and to help deter organized crime.⁵ Finally, the accelerating estrangement of the transatlantic allies can lead to competition for power and global leadership.

These have already become visible goals of French President Jacques Chirac, whose ambition is for Europe, led by France, to become a counterweight to the US, with its own goals and values.⁶ This type of competition could override two vital geostrategic interests shared by the US and Europe: The democratization of the states of the former Soviet Empire while guiding their transition to a free-market economy, and the democratization of the Greater Middle East.⁷

In all this, NATO is the most tangible symbol of the more than 50 years of transatlantic cooperation. But, as the product of a relationship that lacks a coherent or compelling strategy in the post-Cold War era, NATO is fighting for relevance. The war in Iraq may have denigrated NATO's standing to that of a Cold War relic with neither the gumption nor the capacity to contribute to the fight against emerging threats. The US could allow it to stagnate and work only with coalitions of the willing, much as it has in Iraq; but it is with NATO forces and equipment that the US has established the most commonality of doctrine as well as standardization and interoperability. NATO recognizes that it faces a dilemma. It is reluctant to participate in military endeavors that could improve its status because of a fear of failure and the unwillingness of some key members to do so. "If NATO fails it is finished," one spokesman for that organization indicated. "If the biggest defense organization in the world fails, then the door is open for any rogue state or any rogue organization to think that they can solve problems by force."⁸

NATO is also a means by which the US furthers its grand strategic interests. NATO's foundation and its continued existence are owed to the fact that since World War II the US has had an interest in maintaining stability on the continent of Europe regardless of the threat.⁹ From this perspective, one could assert that US participation and strategy in the Balkans was engineered to preserve the transatlantic relationship as much as it was to stop genocide. According to Gen. Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander at that time, "No single target or set of targets was more important than NATO cohesion."¹⁰

The US also needs NATO because the American military is not large enough to carry out the growing commitments that define its national interests throughout the world, now dominated by the global war on terrorism. It must therefore continue to support the growth of NATO and its capabilities which include military support in the form of special operations, access to military facilities, overflight privileges, intelligence sharing and technical training on allied territory. Further, as NATO continues to enlarge to include former Soviet bloc countries, it is becoming a stabilizing force on the continent. Pursuit of the NATO Membership Action Plan enhances the democratization process of candidate countries.

CURRENT STATE OF THE RIFT

Europeans seem to think they are the brain to our brawn, fascinated with our wealth and power, but saddened that such splendid assets could not be directed in a more focused and supplicated manner to do the world real good.¹¹

—Victor Davis Hanson

Following the attacks of 9/11, there appeared to have been genuine sympathy for the US, particularly from France. Some analysts contend that this sympathy was quickly squandered by President Bush's action toward Iraq. Others submit that there never was any sympathy; the attacks of 9/11 simply fulfilled the desires of much of the world. There are also indications that the constant criticism of the United States is not only from the European elite who contribute articles to newspapers and magazines, but also from the citizenry at-large. In short, anti-Americanism is a growing trend in Western Europe.¹²

According to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, attitudes in Western Europe towards the US reached their low just prior to the war in Iraq. In Germany, France and Spain, favorable attitudes have improved but remain 45%, 43% and 38% respectively. One year earlier, Germany was 61% and France was 63%. For the most part, the attitudes are not towards Americans, but represent feelings toward President Bush and some administration policies.¹³ Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the survey is the Western European public's desire to be more independent from the US in matters of security and diplomatic affairs. In France, 76% favor a more distant relationship with the US, as do 58% in Germany. In Turkey, Spain, and Italy it is approximately 60%, and in Britain it is 45%.¹⁴ These figures indicate that Europe feels less of a threat now than they have in the past, just as the threat to the US is perceived as being at its highest due to the global war on terrorism. This revelation, combined with souring attitudes in France and Germany in particular, does not bode well for potential NATO cooperation in US military endeavors.

The importance of this type of European public opinion should not be underrated. Being anti-American is popular in Germany, where a recent poll revealed that one in five believes that the U.S. government orchestrated the 9/11 attacks. In France, a recent best seller asserted that the Pentagon blew itself up on that date.¹⁵ Not only does public opinion drive political action and motivate politicians, but it can also cause damage to US military power. As an example, a Swiss manufacturer of components for precision-guided munitions refused to fill orders after the war in Iraq began. Switzerland also blocked delivery of grenades to Britain causing soldiers to enter Iraq with less than a full combat load.¹⁶

UNDERSTANDING THE RIFT

We are living in the most precipitous moment of change of the last half century as we witness a tectonic shift in Europe, one that is realigning the way an entire continent operates.¹⁷

—Victor Davis Hanson

The Iraq conflict precipitated this latest and largest rift and provides an instructive example of how differently the US and Europe view the world. Where the US saw Saddam Hussein as an immediate threat, the majority of European nations, led by France and Germany, chose to believe that because Hussein had been successfully contained for more than ten years, there was no threat. Compounding this fundamental difference in perception is the fact that although regime change in Iraq may have been a legitimate goal for the US to pursue, it did so in a horribly awkward fashion. The military campaign was an extraordinary success, but the political and diplomatic effort to build a broad international coalition was a disaster. Even as the prowess of the US military reached an all-time high, America's political and moral authority fell to a new low.¹⁸

What underlying factors predispose the alliance to teeter on the edge of breakdown like this every decade? Though it would be difficult to argue with the notion that US unilateralism and lack of diplomacy prior to the Iraq invasion exacerbated any existing estrangement, there appear to be three major arguments emerging as root causes for the tendency toward dysfunction. First, realists would contend that Europe's failure to rebuild itself as a strong military power after the Second World War has caused it to view the world, and the United States in particular, through the lens of a weaker power. It is therefore disinclined to use military force regardless of its propriety. Second, is the notion that the rift is natural because America and Europe have radically different cultures and ideologies based on their histories. Finally, there is the contention that a divergence in national interests and lack of a common strategy are responsible.

DISPARITY IN POWER

Where idealists would vehemently assert that cultural differences, the politics of unilateralism and US national strategy have increased the divide, realists submit that the cause is based almost solely on the tremendous disparity in military power. According to the realist model, Europe's lack of military might influences the way it views the rest of the world and is the reason why it views threats differently than the US. Nations that are strong militarily will act as powerful nations do. Those that are not, tend to seek protection from international law and

international institutions. Historically, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the United States acted much the same way Europe does today. Significantly less powerful than the Europeans, the young nation favored international law and opinion over military force. Even while conquering the less powerful people of its own continent, America repudiated the aggressive politics of the Europeans.¹⁹ Now, European perception of international threats is from the viewpoint of a weaker military power. As a consequence, like early Americans, they are more inclined toward political solutions and are extremely reluctant to use military force.

Realists also emphasize that throughout the Cold War, Europe enjoyed a virtually free ride on US military power against the Soviet threat. At the same time, this power had the effect of masking European weakness. After the Cold War, Europe did little to close the power gap between itself and its US protector. To the Europeans, it was a conscious choice and an opportunity to take advantage of a significant peace dividend. The end of the Cold War did not, however, reduce the importance of military power; and while European spending dropped to less than 2 percent of GDP, US defense spending remained well above 3 percent.²⁰ Over the course of the 1990's, the gap in military capabilities became so substantial that from the American point of view, Europe became more of a strategic asset than a true ally. In 2002, the US spent nearly 3.7 percent of GDP on defense while half of NATO's member nations spent less than 2 percent.

The military imbalance was demonstrated by American dominance in the war in the Balkans, which deeply troubled Europe. First, it was an embarrassment and a blow to European honor that the US could do so much more than the Europeans in a region as close as the Balkans. Second, it demonstrated how European dependence on American military power enabled the US to influence international diplomacy. Europe's military weakness produced diplomatic weakness. For the continent, economic power alone could not guarantee strategic or geopolitical power.²¹

CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

There is no doubt that there are cultural differences between Americans and Europeans. The much-published list of differences includes such contemporary issues as economics, the environment, the death penalty, family and religion, genetically modified foods, and the Arabs and the Jews.²² Politically, in the past few decades, the nations of Europe have also emerged as social welfare states.

Cultural theorists indicate that the uniqueness of the American experience, which can be traced back to the frontier days, created a culture of self-reliance and a "morality in terms of

action rather than rhetoric.²³ Americans are bellicose, impatient, and have a tendency toward instant action and gratification. This need for immediate action and instantaneous results is reflected in foreign policy. The war in Iraq exemplified US haste in its unwillingness to invest the time to coalesce a multilateral effort when immediate action was not critical. The post-World War II Europeans, in contrast, tend toward a more peaceful, diplomatic approach that complements their desire to keep limits on military spending.

Theorists also assert that how President Bush communicates to the American people, and at the same time the world, shapes perceptions differently and is also indicative of a cultural difference. Whereas Europeans try to influence with “subtlety and indirection,” and approach problems with “nuance and sophistication,” Americans, epitomized by George W. Bush, are candid and direct.²⁴ His calling for Osama Bin Laden “dead or alive,” the “axis of evil” speech and the use of the term “crusade” for the war on terrorism excited the American public. But in Europe it caused consternation and dismay among those Europeans who already viewed the US president as boorish and representative of American arrogance.

Significant cultural differences, theorists point out, culminate in the great divergence between Americans and Europeans on the use of US military power. It is this aspect of US policy and action that is most at odds with Europe’s sense of purpose. The reluctance to use force, the emphasis on diplomacy and soft power, and the more peaceful strategic culture are relatively new phenomena in Europe -- a departure from the strategic culture that dominated Europe for hundreds of years and at least until World War I. Europeans understand the consequences of power politics, excessive use of military force, and policies derived from fervent nationalism. Their culture and ideologies have emerged to represent a rejection of this past. Americans should not, however, be expected to be empathetic to the darker aspects of European history and certainly not European preference to dismiss the fact that balance of power is historically the result of military prowess. Americans pragmatically remember two World Wars, the ensuing reconstruction of the European continent, and the protection afforded Europe for 50 years of Cold War.²⁵

Europe’s new peaceful strategic culture is also self-reinforcing. Defense programs are developed to counter threats; but as realist theorists assert, there is little such perception in Europe.²⁶ In other words, Europeans will not spend money on defense when there is no threat. But because their new ideology seeks to avoid threats, it is unlikely that they would recognize one should it actually arise. The governments of Europe, therefore, rationalize spending government money on social and cultural programs to the detriment of defense. This is why Europe believes the arsenal to combat terrorism should consist of international criminal law,

intelligence, economics, nation building and peacekeeping while minimizing, although not eschewing, firepower.

DIVERGING NATIONAL INTERESTS

Still another cause of the American-European rift can be attributed to a divergence of national interests. The most visible proof of this divergence is over the US invasion of Iraq, which underscores differences in policy toward the Middle East, the propriety of the use of force, and the role of international organizations.

US policy toward the Middle East is a very real source of contention to Europeans. The so-called "Bush Doctrine" seeks to reinvent the political order in the Middle East. Once Iraq is democratized, it will lead to a spillover effect in the region and peace can be more easily realized in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Once again, however, the Europeans view the threat differently and are disturbed by the direction President Bush is leading his nation. "For France, Germany and many other Western European states," one analyst has observed, "terrorism is a crime more than an act of war, and stability in the Islamic world is to be found in nuanced diplomacy and support for the current crop of Arab governments, despite their repressive nature. In Europe's thinking, Saddam Hussein's regime was to be contained, not removed from power."²⁷ From all this flows European fears that the instability in Iraq will lead to a breakdown into religious factions creating greater regional instability, threatening their flow of oil and sending millions of Arab refugees to Europe who could radicalize the 15 million Arabs already living there. Moreover, they see their own participation as a threat to their economic interests (the Middle East is Europe's biggest trading partner), destructive to their strong relations with Islamic leaders, and opening Europe up to acts of terrorism.²⁸

European anti-Americanism has most assuredly been fueled by the hegemonic, unilateralist tendencies of the United States, but a realist would be inclined to see a reverse cause and effect. A realist would contend that unilateralism is the consequence of a European failure to recognize threats and defend appropriately. The gap in military capability and Europe's reluctance to use the military instrument of power has indeed prompted the US to act unilaterally. The US National Security Strategy document now proclaims that the US will play a direct and unconstrained role in responding to threats.²⁹ Obviously, Europe objects strongly to this emphasized commitment to unilateralism.

Other differences in national interests relate to international organizations. In recent years, the US has been widely accused of exceptionalism for its decision to not participate in a number of international treaties or organizations. These mainly include withdrawal from the

1972 Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty, and lack of support for the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and the International Criminal Court. But, as the world's dominant and unrivaled military power, the US would be constrained to have to abide by international institutions, regimes and treaties.³⁰ The Bush administration's decision to walk away from these cooperative endeavors may have harmed America's long-term interests, but in a uni-polar world the great power is never inclined to subordinate its interests to those of other states or to the interests of the international community. In contrast, Europe relies on exactly these types of cooperation to gain equal footing with, and protection from, those countries that are more powerful. Interestingly, the Europeans are unlikely to reach Kyoto-established goals, and some European countries have signed-on to US missile defense efforts.

The US acts in its own self-interest, unilaterally if it has to, largely because it can. But to its detriment, according to some analysts, when events call for multilateralism, the hegemonic US invariably conducts allied consultations "not so much to forge a common policy, let alone build goodwill, as to persuade others of the rightness of the US cause."³¹ Rather than trying to accommodate the Europeans in building a coalition to enter Iraq, as distasteful or tedious and time-consuming as that might have been for some in the Bush administration, the perception is that they cast European concerns aside. Even those European allies that supported the US campaign complained privately about the lack of consultation and diplomatic effort.³²

SOLUTIONS

After September 11 and Iraq, the United States and Europe must again heed the wake-up call and coalesce around a new purpose and a new grand strategy, one fit to meet a different set of challenges beyond Europe. If they fail to do so, the greatest alliance in modern history will become increasingly irrelevant.³³

—Ronald D. Asmus

History has shown that what has traditionally kept the Atlantic Alliance alive has been commonality of purpose, and that is what seems to have been lost since the Cold War. If the US does in fact recognize the need to maintain a strong alliance rather than pursue strategy with coalitions of the willing, and if Europe recognizes the possible consequences of its own actions, then both may be able to unite on a common strategy to meet the new challenges they will face together in this post-Cold War era. There are places where the US and Europe can and need to work together, there are concessions that both sides can make to improve relations, and there are ways of doing business that each must change.

FINDING PLACES TO WORK TOGETHER

The first area of cooperation is furthering democracy on the European landmass. Much of this is already in progress as the eastern European countries vie for accession into NATO. This strategy must also extend to Russia, and other countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, though many may never actually achieve full membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions. These countries must be treated with a high priority because in the post-9/11 environment, they have strategic importance in combating the war on terrorism.³⁴

The Atlantic Alliance also needs to cooperate to do more to manage the deteriorating political situation in the Middle East. Though the US and Europe are members of the Quartet (US, EU, UN, Russia) developing the “roadmap” for peace in the Middle East, they can do more to help transform the region, now a breeding ground for terrorism, into a peaceful community of nations. The first step would be a cooperative effort on Iraqi reconstruction. It is time for those European countries, which have held back from participating for the purposes of international grandstanding, to get on with the business of promoting democracy and creating a model for the region. Following success in Iraq, the strategy must focus on achieving a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Not only is this critical to the stability of the region, but as one former State Department official has pointed out, “it is also critical in terms of Washington’s credibility. If the United States is to be seen as a promoter of democracy in the Arab world, it must show that it is committed to peace between Israelis and Palestinians.”³⁵

At the same time, the strategy should promote positive regime change in Iran to prevent that nation from obtaining nuclear weapon capability and to encourage democratic change. The goals for democratic influence must also extend to those regimes that have traditionally been allies including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Pursuing this strategy will require military “hard power” and diplomatic “soft power.” This could conceivably take decades of sustained engagement both within the region and also between the United States and Europe. The strategic cooperation needs to be of the magnitude and intensity that ultimately won the Cold War.³⁶

THE US NEEDS TO GET BETTER AT DIPLOMACY

Misperceptions about American policies in the world create both hatred and frustration even as the ideals and American way of life remain extraordinarily attractive. “I’m amazed that there is such a misunderstanding of what our country is about that people would hate us...,” President Bush has commented in this regard. “Like most Americans, I just can’t believe it. Because I know how good we are, and we’ve got to do a better job of making our case.”³⁷ These misperceptions detract from US ability to prosecute the war on terrorism and degrade

power and influence in many parts of the world. Simply stated, and as the President acknowledged, the US has not been good at communication and diplomacy. The State Department's culture devalues public diplomacy because making and executing policy are considered more substantive endeavors. Further, the most senior US government officials rarely grant interviews to foreign media. For foreign policy professionals, issues related to "policy" have higher priority, and political appointees see these efforts as a waste of time because foreigners do not vote.³⁸

From the President on down, public diplomacy needs to become a priority. American success in foreign policy is directly proportional to its ability to influence foreign publics. This can be effected by elevating the importance of public diplomacy in the foreign policy process, strengthening public opinion research, developing a public affairs rapid response capability, shifting more of the diplomacy burden to ambassadors, embassies and Foreign Service officers, and engaging foreign opinion leaders in open forums.³⁹

THE US NEEDS TO GET BETTER AT MULTILATERALISM

The US needs to reexamine the way it articulates and executes its National Security Strategy and incorporate language that truly recognizes and protects the value of NATO and Euro-American cooperation. Unilateralism may be the default strategy of great powers, but that does not obviate the need to cooperate or ally with other states. The value of seeking cooperation from the Europeans, particularly when their contribution is not strictly required, is in maintaining mutually supportive relations and avoiding the drift that over time can turn into destructive rivalry. The US should also lean toward its formerly held strategic views that treat its security partnerships not just as instrumental tools, but as critical components of an American-led world political order. These partnerships benefit the US by leveraging its power and giving it legitimacy.⁴⁰

The US should also consider subordinating itself to some international organizations. If the Bush administration wants European cooperation in US-led multilateral coalitions, then it should also address the multilateral issues that concern Europe. Europeans categorize US opposition to the Kyoto protocol, the biological weapons protocol, the ABM Treaty, and the ICC as unilateralism. US unwillingness to participate in these opportunities for cooperation sends the wrong signal. This does not imply that the US should patronize the Europeans by committing to supranational organizations, but it can make a more concerted effort to find valid alternatives and compromises. American foreign policy should put its primacy to use in the service of cooperative efforts.⁴¹

EUROPE NEEDS TO “GET REAL” AND INCREASE DEFENSE SPENDING

Europe must acknowledge that a peaceful world order can only be maintained if powerful nations are willing to enforce international norms and mandates. Europe also needs to recognize that when the use of force as an instrument of power is a viable option, it must have something to offer and be willing to act. In the post-Cold War era, it has been solely American primacy that has sustained the rule of law. As a prime example, the Bush administration acted unilaterally to push members of the Security Council in 2002 to own up to its responsibility to compel Iraq to abide by its international obligation to rid itself of weapons of mass destruction.⁴² Europe needs to display this same fortitude in the international arena if it expects the US to consult with it in just these types of defining moments.

If Europe wants to be treated as more of an equal in matters pertaining to world power, then it needs to make more of a commitment to upgrading its military forces by increasing defense spending, particularly on C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Information) capability and airlift. It is neither likely nor expected that the Europeans close the now-substantial military gap with America, but certain capabilities should be maintained if the continental military is to be interoperable with US forces. Moreover, military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated that US and European forces will have to go beyond their borders to deter threats and respond to them.⁴³ NATO needs to acknowledge this and be prepared to commit its developing rapid deployment force out of area, much like they committed forces to Afghanistan.

There are a number of other ways in which NATO can be viable without having to match US military power. Initiatives are in place now to restructure some NATO countries militarily so that they need to maintain only certain military expertise or equipment. This also makes it more tenable for the smaller new NATO countries to make valid military contributions. If the countries of Europe really do place greater emphasis on contributions to NATO tasks and regional military cooperation than their own national defense, it makes more sense to restructure militarily on this basis to make more effective use of resources.⁴⁴ Another possibility is for NATO to focus more on a military that is trained, equipped, and organized to sustain peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, a less daunting and more realistic task than building a high-tech military.

With greater military power as a result of increased spending and structural focus, Europe might also be less reluctant to use military power as a viable policy alternative and act more in line with US interests. In the international economic arena, where European power is now about equal to that of the US, Europe already behaves in a much more aggressive and assertive fashion.⁴⁵

EU SHOULD NOT BE A COUNTERWEIGHT

There is no question that many in Paris desire to see a France-led European Union as a counterweight to U.S. power. Germany, a troubled nation with economic and demographic difficulties, and an understandable aversion to the exercise of military and nation-state power, has followed France's lead. The European Union as a whole has embraced a post-nationalist view of the world that is extremely reluctant to use military force.⁴⁶

The notion that the European Union could develop as a counterweight to US power is both dangerous and divisive. It is duplicitous for French President Chirac to object fiercely to US unilateralism and then attempt to take Europe on its own path... a move counterproductive to both the transatlantic alliance and to European unity and integration. In essence, countering American power with European power would be nearly analogous to a containment policy against the United States. This is a position that no American leader would find acceptable, and it would force the US to staunchly oppose further European integration.⁴⁷

EUROPE CAN FORGIVE IRAQI DEBTS

Iraq owes \$383 billion in total debt, much of it to France, Germany and Russia. With a GDP of just \$25 billion it may be the most indebted nation in the world. If France and Germany wish for Iraq to prosper and do not wish to make military or monetary contributions to rebuilding, they should forgive the debts, particularly as they are unrepayable. There is also legal precedence for doing so under an international law doctrine of "odious debts." Under this doctrine, debt incurred by a dictator should not be passed on to the populace that survives the dictatorship.⁴⁸ Currently, both of these countries are exploring the possibilities of restructuring the debt or providing some relief. France and Germany should also accept the US decision to exclude French and German-run businesses from bidding on lucrative Iraqi reconstruction contracts. It is unfair of them to expect to gain financially from an effort to which they made no monetary or military contribution, especially when nations of far lesser means supported the US-led effort and will also vie for the contracts. Both of these actions would do much to reduce American perceptions of the duplicity of French and German policy.

CONCLUSION

Transatlantic tension is perhaps greater than ever, but it is nothing new. For all their actual and perceived similarities, the US and Europe have developed different ideologies based on dissimilar histories and cultures. Since the end of the Cold War, these differences have been magnified by the divergent paths the two entities have taken with respect to understanding the post-Soviet threat to the new world order. While the Europeans virtually took a "vacation"

from military responsibility in favor of furthering social programs, the US continued to build up its already superior military capabilities. The attendant power gap further exacerbated any underlying tensions. With diminished capability, Europeans tend to view military force as a secondary instrument of power at best. On the other hand, the US is realistic and understands that use of force, or the credible threat of force, is still required to sustain the rule of law in the modern world.

Further, the US has a far different role in the world than does Europe. It has global responsibilities and its strategies support and shape this view.⁴⁹ But the new reality is that the war on terrorism requires the resources of all the allies. Both sides of the Atlantic Alliance need to come to terms with the fact that despite their issues and constraints, they have to make it work. Their basic values and culture are in reality quite similar if compared to those of other regions of the world, and this will always allow the parties to return to amicable relations. They can agree to disagree on any number of issues, but ultimately they need to agree on the threat and the strategies to disarm it.

WORD COUNT=6000

ENDNOTES

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⁵ John Ikenberry, "America's Imperial Ambition," *Foreign Affairs* (September-October 2002): 58.

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¹³ "Views of a Changing World," *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, June 2003, 19.

¹⁴ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵ Investors Business Daily, "To Forgive is Divine," 27 October 2003, A20.

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¹⁷ Victor Davis Hanson, "Geriatric Teenagers," *National Review Online*, 02 May 2003; available from <<http://www.nationalreview.com/hanson/hanson050203.asp>>; Internet; accessed 05 October 2003.

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²⁰ Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power; America and Europe in the New World Order*, 25.

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²² Hadar, 4.

²³ Victor Davis Hanson, "Goodbye to Europe," *Commentary*, October 2002, 24.

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